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PSCI 250E.01: Introduction to Political Theory

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University of Montana
Department of Political Science

PSC 250E
Spring 2014
MWF 9:10-10

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Introduction to Political Theory

Course Description:

Introduction to Political Theory (PSC 250) familiarizes students with the basic concepts and issues that preoccupy the political theorist, including the origins of government and society, the nature of justice, and the meaning of political legitimacy. We will begin by considering the tension between politics and philosophy and continue with an examination of the major political thinkers from Plato to Marx, who have influenced the way we think about human nature, justice, the good life, government, freedom, citizenship, etc. We will conclude with the "end of political theory" debate.

At the outset, let us consider some basic questions about the relationship between political philosophy and ideology. First, is there a political theory that is not an ideology, or a theorist that is not an ideologue? If ideology is not the same as political philosophy or as good (as Plato suggests), then how does one avoid being labeled an ideologue? Lastly, what does it mean to you when someone says: "today it is no longer possible to construct a genuine political philosophy"?

Texts:

R. Grey (editor) *Political Theory & the Human Predicament: An Introduction to Major Political Thinkers*, San Diego: Cognella Publishing, 2013 (ISBN 978-1-62131-525-4); can be purchased on-line at: <https://students.universityreaders.com/store/>.

Huxley, *Brave New World*

Course Objectives: upon successfully completing the course work, the student should be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the political and ethical values associated with classical and modern thinkers, including Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Burke and Marx.
2. Identify major themes and ideas associated with the ideologies of utopianism, classical and reform liberalism, utilitarianism, conservatism, feminism, Marxism, as well as contemporary variations such as neo-Marxism.
3. Provide an interpretative, critical essay on a dystopian novel, examining how the ethical ideals of Plato are embraced, perverted and/or negated. (See attached Paper Guidelines)

Grading:

The work of the course consists of reading all assignments, participating by raising questions and attending lectures—students who ask questions usually have good lecture notes, completing the scheduled **two-part midterm** (30% of course grade), and the **final** (35% of course grade.) In addition, each student must complete on time **an analytical essay** of Huxley's *Brave New World* (35% of course grade.)* Please see attached for instructions on the Huxley paper.

* Late papers will receive a grade reduction for every day it's late.

Students with disabilities may request reasonable modifications by contacting me. The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). "Reasonable" means the University permits no fundamental alterations of academic standards or retroactive modifications. For more information, please consult <http://www.umt.edu/disability>

Tentative Course Schedule:

- 1/27- Introduction to the Course
2/29 Read: *Political Theory & the Human Predicament*: Introduction & Chapter I, Plato, *The Apology*
- 1/31 Who is the just individual?
Read: Chapter II: Plato, *The Republic*, Books I- II
- 2/3- Plato's Organic Theory of the State
2/5 Read: Chapter 2: Plato, *The Republic*, Books II-IV
- 2/7- Utopianism: Plato's Ideal State & Perfect Justice: Community of Wives
2/10 Children, and Property
Read: Chapter 2: Plato, *The Republic*, Book III, V, VII
Recommend: Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*
- 2/12- Possibility of the Ideal State: the Ship & Cave Allegories
2/14 Read: Chapter II, Plato, *The Republic*, Book VI, VII
- * * * * * **February 17th Monday, President's Day Holiday. . .no class** * * * * *
- 2/19 Decline of the Ideal State
Read: Chapter 2, Plato, *The Republic*, Books VIII
- 2/21 Plato v. Aristotle
Read: Chapter 2: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book II
- 2/24 Review & Discussion of Plato
- * * * * * **Wednesday, February 26th * * * * *Midterm Part I: Plato's Republic** * * * * *
- 2/28 Aristotle: Politics As Science
Read: Chapter 2: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I
- 3/3 Aristotle's Biological Analysis: Family, Village, Polis
Read: Chapter 2: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book II; Book III (pp. 130-135)
- 3/5 Aristotle's Classification of Constitutions & the Best Practical State
Read: Chapter 2: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book III (pp. 135-143; 145-148), Book IV (pp. 142-144); Book IV (pp. 148-152)
- 3/7- Aristotle on Revolution
3/10 Read: Chapter 2: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book IV (pp. 152-155); Book V
- ++Reading Huxley, *Brave New World***
- 3/12 Review & Discuss Aristotle
- * * * * * **March 15th Friday, Midterm Part II: Aristotle's Politics** * * * * *
- 3/17- Machiavelli: Political Realist or Idealist?
3/19 Read: Chapter 4: Machiavelli, *The Prince*
- 3/21 Essay Discussion of *Brave New World* essay

- 3/24 Hobbes, Locke: the State of Nature & Social Contract Theory
Read: Chapter 5: Hobbes, *Leviathan*; Chapter 6: Locke, *Two Treatises on Government* (pp. 229-235; pp. 240-251)
- 3/26 Classical Liberalism: Locke & Revolution
Read: Chapter 6: Locke, *Two Treatises*, (pp. 252-263)
- 3/28 Classical Liberalism: Locke & Property Rights (pp. 235-240)
Read: Chapter 6: Locke, *Two Treatises*

***** Brave New World Paper Due Friday March 28th See last page of syllabus *****

***** March 29th - April 6th Spring Break *****

- 4/7 Classical Liberalism: Hume, Smith & "the Automatic Social Mechanism" of the Free Market
Read: Chapter 7: Hume & Smith; Chapter 8: Rousseau, *The Social Contract*
- 4/9-4/14 Utilitarianism: Bentham, James Mill & John Stuart Mill
Read: Chapter 11: Bentham, *Principles of Morals*; Chapter 12: J.S. Mill, *On Liberty* (pp. 453-482)
- 4/16-4/18 Edmund Burke & the Critique of Political Idealism
Read: Chapter 9: Burke, *Reflections*
- 4/21 Conservative Anti-Feminist Thought
Read: Chapter 3: Aristotle, *History of Animals*, Book IX (pp. 164-165)
- 4/23 Feminist Political Theory: Mary Wollstonecraft & J.S. Mill
Read: Chapter 10: Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men & A Vindication of the Rights of Women*; Chapter 12: J.S. Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (pp. 482-498)
- 4/25-4/28 Radicalism: Marx's Critique of Liberalism & Conservatism
Read: Chapter 13: Marx, *Economic & Philosophical Manuscript* (pp. 509-515)
- 4/30 Marx & the "Earthquake Theory" of Revolution
Read: Chapter 13: Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (pp. 515-544)
- 5/2-5/5 Neo-Marxism: the Orthodox School vs. Revisionists
Recommend: Bernstein's *Evolutionary Socialism* (1899); Karl Kautsky, *The Class Struggle* (1899); Rosa Luxemburg, selections from *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks* (1970); Lenin's *Imperialism* (1917)
- 5/7 End of Political Theory?
Recommend: Bell, *The End of Ideology* (1962) & Fukuyama, *End of History* (1992)
- 5/9 Review for Comprehensive Final
Read: Lecture notes & review selected readings.

• * Final is Thursday May 15th at 10:10 am-12:10pm *****

Guidelines for Essay
"Brave New World: Politics & Society in the Year 2014?"
(35% of course grade)

I. Purpose

- A. **Objective:** Provide *an analytical essay* comparing and contrasting the ideas/themes found in *Brave New World* with the political theories/thinkers that we have covered in the course. An analytical essay is not a book review or an editorial. A good essay supports its analysis with direct references to the novel, showing how Huxley borrows, satirizes, and/or negates the ideas of other western political thinkers. Essay should address no more than three thinkers and/or themes (see suggestions below under analysis), or may compare and contrast Huxley's dystopia with one other theorists (e.g. Plato & his ideal polis.)

II. Content

- A. **Description & Thesis** (10% of essay value)

Provide only a cursory description of the content of Huxley's *Brave New World*. Assume that the reader is familiar with the plot of the book. (No more than one paragraph.) Provide clear thesis, indicated what themes, thinkers, and works will be used for analysis.

- B. **Analysis** (55% of essay value)

This part of the paper should constitute the major portion of your work. Look for the *ideas* that Huxley draws upon in terms of the political theories covered in class. **Some suggested questions to consider for starting the paper:** Can you identify radical, conservative, and/or liberal ideas in his model community? (To what degree does Huxley mock Plato's notions of ethical truth and justice?)

Also consider: What are the underlying assumptions about human nature? What is the role of the state? And what role does political ideology (Fordism?) play in Huxley's novel? What is the value system of the society? (Look at, for instance, the education system of the different classes: what are they taught, if anything, regarding the party doctrine, slogans, and history?) What are the sources of discontent among the inhabitants? (* These questions are only a suggested list to help you get started, but do not feel confined to only them.)

- C. **Conclusion:** (30% of essay value)

Does Huxley convince the reader that this dystopia is possible or inevitable? Do you see things in our present society that might lead to Huxley's *Brave New World*? And if not, why not?

- D. **Planning**

Part B should comprise the major portion of your paper. Devote no more than a paragraph to Part A, and two paragraphs to Part C.

II. Style & Sources (5% or 4 pts of paper value)

- A. **Additional Reading**

You may want to do some additional reading to substantiate your positions for parts IB and IC. However, this is not necessary. You will probably be better served by reviewing lecture and discussion notes, not to mention reading Huxley's work carefully.

- B. **Quotations**

All quotations or paraphrasing in your work from any material must be enclosed in quotation marks and properly cited as to their origin. See a writing manual for consistent format. **Plagiarism:** *Representing another person's words, ideas, data, or materials as one's own* is a violation of the university code of conduct and will result in a grade of F on the paper, please see:
<http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/documents/StudentConductCode>

- C. **Bibliography**

You should include a complete bibliography for all outside books used for this paper.

- D. **Editing:**

Be sure to edit and proof your final copy! Points will be deducted for grammatical and spelling errors.

Please attach grading sheet (next page)

Please Attach To Your Paper
PSC250E: Introduction to Political Theory
Spring 2014

Description & Thesis – 10% (3.5 points) _____

- Clear and coherent thesis statement
- Relevant to materials presented in lectures and throughout course materials

Analysis – 55% (20 points) _____

- Strong supporting evidence of the thesis
- Relevant information is clearly presented
- Fully developed arguments
- Credit is given to outside sources, where appropriate

Conclusion — 30% (7.5 points) _____

- Conclusion: a clear restatement of the answer to the central question

Format, Mechanics & Bibliography 5% (4 pts) _____

- Format: 5-6 typed, double-spaced pages, 10-12 point font
- Grammar: Neatness, spelling, grammar, punctuation, and organization
- Bibliography: Follows Chicago/Turabian citation style guidelines

TOTAL (35 points) _____

Additional Comments:
